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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Holy One, we desire to do Your will. May we acknowledge You as the source of all that is worthy. Thank You for Your gracious righteousness that is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Lord, help us to find rest and contentment in You.

Remind our lawmakers not to seek security apart from You. May they not forget that righteousness exalts a nation and that You are our shelter and shield. Equip them with everything good for doing Your will. Give them steadfast hearts, which no unworthy affection may drag downward. Teach them to serve You as You deserve.

And, Lord, sustain those who are dealing with the trauma of the Amtrak train derailment in Philadelphia.

We pray in Your mighty Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PAUL). The majority leader is recognized.

AMTRAK TRAIN DERAILMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, many of us awoke to terrible news this morning. We are still awaiting more in-

formation about what happened outside of Philadelphia, but we know this tragedy will touch the lives of many.

The Senate sends its condolences to the victims, those who were injured, and their families and loved ones. We also reaffirm our gratitude to our Nation's first responders.

TRADE LEGISLATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, it was really quite something to watch President Obama's party vote to filibuster his top domestic legislative priority yesterday. That is what we saw right here in the Senate. It left pretty much everyone scratching their heads.

The Democratic leader made clear yesterday that he was not interested in debating the "merits of the bill." In other words, he told us that this filibuster is for political reasons only.

It makes sense, considering that this filibuster is all about appeasing a facts-optional crowd on the left that hasn't been able to marshal much of a serious, fact-based argument to support its opposition to more American exports and more American trade jobs.

You don't have to take my word for it. It is President Obama who said the far left's arguments don't "stand the test of fact and scrutiny." It is President Obama who says the far left is just "making stuff up." And it is President Obama who warns the far left about "ignoring realities."

In other words, hardly anyone believes there is a serious policy leg for these folks to stand on—not that there is a viable process excuse for this filibuster, either.

A senior Senator in the Democrat leadership essentially rebutted the latest process argument yesterday. He said: "[N]o one disputed in committee that we'd get a vote separately"—separately—"on the customs bill" because it contained a provision, he said, that would bring down TPA.

What we can infer from this is that the demand to merge four separate

trade bills—including the Customs bill—into one trade bill isn't a strategy designed to pass better trade legislation but a poison pill designed to kill it. So we certainly won't be doing that, because our goal here should be to score a serious policy win for the American people and not claim a symbolic scalp for the extreme left.

That is why Republicans have chosen to work closely with President Obama to advance a serious trade and economic growth agenda. It is not a natural position for us, I assure you, or for the President to be in politically, but we agree that strengthening the middle class by knocking down unfair trade restrictions is a good idea. Since we agree on the policy, I think we have a duty to the American people to cooperate responsibly to pursue it. And that is just what we have done. Not a single Republican—not one—voted yesterday against at least opening the debate on this 21st century American trade agenda.

Now, all that is needed to move forward is for our Democratic friends who tell the public they support trade to withdraw support for a filibuster they know is wrong on the merits.

Yes, I understand it may be uncomfortable for our Democratic colleagues to cross loud factions in their party, but Republicans proved yesterday that it is possible to put good policy over easy politics.

So Democrats have to choose. Will they allow themselves to keep being led around by the most extreme elements of their party, even when it runs counter to the needs of their constituents, or will they take a stand and lead? The American people are counting on them to make the right choice.

When they do, they will find the same willing partners who have always been here. They will find we are ready to continue working across the aisle in good faith to move forward.

Recall that we have only gotten as far as we have already because of a significant bipartisan compromise on

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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